



Columnist Robert De Andreis

Afternoon of a faun

by ROBERT DE ANDREIS

Iborrowed my sister's truck last week on Valentine's day to run some errands. First I had to see my doctor, then I had to pick up my check at *The Sentinel* and finally I had a lunch date with my reporter friend, Evelyn C. White, at the *Chronicle*. And oh, yes: I managed to get into some mischief along the way.

My doctor is very surprised that I'm still alive. How's that for a mixed review? I asked how much longer I can take the MAI drugs I've been on for a year. He said he didn't know because no patient he's had has lived on them this long. I can't explain it, but this time last year I thought I was going to die within weeks. Instead, I've lived for a year with hardly any T cells.

I take lots of pills: Fluconazole, Myambutol, Clarithromycin, Lithium, Loperamide and three weekly self-injections of Epogen and five of Neupogen. My doctor suggested I start ddC even though I figured it was too late for that, but we're going to give it a try. Once a month, I get a testosterone shot, inhale Pentamidine and get my chest port flushed. I get my eyes dilated and tortuously photographed once a month as they check the left eye, where the gancyclovir implant is stitched inside. I have to sit in a pitch black room with my eyelids held open while a technician gets annoyed at me for flinching every time the rapid succession of flashbulbs go off in my eye. I always tell him, "It's involuntary, I can't help it." My eyes remain dilated all day and I have to walk around my apartment in dark sunglasses with the shades drawn, like Norma Desmond. I also get blood drawn twice a month and every six weeks I have AIDS skin things

burned off my face with zaps of electricity. All this is just maintenance, when nothing else is going wrong.

I couldn't wait to get out of the doctor's office on such a beautiful, crystal clear day. I drove down Folsom Street toward *The Sentinel* office and remembered how close it is to those sleazy adult bookstores I used to haunt a century ago. I parked nearby and strolled over to the office, so proud that I didn't tempt fate. Besides, the sun was too bright to walk in there at that hour — I always thought bookstores worked much better at about three in the morning when you can find those eager, tweaked-out sex pigs.

Whew! That was a close call! But just as I innocently walked closer to the office, something happened so fast I didn't even know what hit me. Somehow, a stranger triggered me sexually into following him and within half a block of my destination he sort of lured me into his apartment. All of a sudden I was in some guy's tacky living room, sitting on a plaid couch, and he looked much hotter outside from a distance. We whipped them out, fooled around for a split second and I said "Yeah, hot, whatever. Listen, I've got to go." I've learned to make those quick exits. I felt slightly disheveled as I went into the office to pick up my check, hoping I didn't have dick on my breath.

I dashed back to the

truck, not looking left or right, and drove off to see Evelyn. I bought her some flowers and we had a tasteful lunch when I popped the question: "I want to write a book before I die. I figure I have about another year left, and I don't care if it's published posthumously. But what to write about?"

Evelyn said, "Go to where the silences are and speak. Write about what you know. Write about the sex world." She's right, I thought. Somehow, that talk triggered me sexually when we parted. It was one thirty and I had to have the truck back by three, when my sister finishes teaching. My mind raced: I could go to any place in the city now. It's a beautiful day. Ah, that certain woodland location. Yes!

That's where I met him. We fooled around for a few minutes. We made out right there as I pushed him against a tree. But I had to go! It was quarter to three, so we made plans to rendezvous in an hour.

At four o'clock, he showed up at my door. I was hoping that the change of location hadn't altered the tension. It's been a while since I've brought a man over in the late afternoon, and the sunlight tells no lies. Out the window, toward the east, was a fireball in the sky — the dazzling full moon was rising over my undead body. He pulled me down on the couch and was all over me. "Damn, I hope he doesn't feel my Herman Munster chest port," I thought — I wasn't prepared with any reasonable comeback line. All I could do was pray to our Lady of the Immaculate Deception. By some miracle, and a lot of slippery moves, he never felt it. Somehow, sex just isn't as carefree as it once was.

He wrapped his hands around my cute, tight little stomach and inched up toward disaster, when I wriggled out and sprung to my feet. "Let's go," I said seductively, as he followed me into my bedroom. I threw back the sheets and pushed him onto my bed. But what can be so alluring and seductive in the heat of passion can change in a snap. The second after I shot my load, I wanted him out the door, immediately! I kept thinking, "If I get him out of here in ten minutes, I can still watch Ricki Lake."

Just then the phone rang. I didn't get it, but the answering machine was turned up loud. There I was, lying in bed with a stranger, when the voice of Bob, my darling ex-lover, called to wish me a happy Valentine's Day. It was precisely because of mischief like this that we split; now, I am convinced, it's mischief like this that is keeping me alive.

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